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A Man Unaccustomed to Losing

Richard Milhous Nixon

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CHICAGO, July 27—Vice President Richard Milhous Nixon is unaccustomed to losing. And he has the intention of beginning now.

He is the product of the school of politics that holds a winning campaign is based on "show yourself to as many voters as possible, shake as many hands as you can reach, and keep your opponent on the defensive." Although he did not rise through the ranks, he conducted his first campaign for a seat in the House of Representatives as if he were running for precinct captain. He has not lost since. And he has served notice that his campaign for the Presidency will be the "most intensive in history," covering all fifty states.

Man in the News

Once or twice since reaching the national scene, Mr. Nixon has seriously considered quitting politics.

"Is it worth it?" he once asked a friend after a particularly grueling Congressional election campaign in which Republicans lost ground. But after President Eisenhower's illnesses of 1955 and 1956, he took over as the Administration's major campaigner.

In addition to campaigns and the banquet circuit between campaigns, Mr. Nixon has traveled 117,732 miles in foreign countries, according to his office log, as the President's personal representative on goodwill missions.

With the encouragement of President Eisenhower, the Vice-Presidency has grown into a major political office. Because of this, Mr. Nixon has gained stature as a political leader and a statesman.

But conflicts over his personality and actions have arisen almost from the beginning of his political life. Today, at 47, he is still the center of controversy as strong as ever.

Uneasiness Expressed

Throughout the country, voters who express an uneasiness about Mr. Nixon have difficulty in finding a precise explanation. "I don't like him," they are inclined to say, after groping for more concrete reasons.

One man, however, former President Harry S. Truman, has a clear-cut reason for distrusting Mr. Nixon. "He called me a traitor," Mr. Truman has asserted. The accusation has repeatedly been denied by Mr. Nixon, but to the satisfaction of few Democrats, who view his 1954 campaign as one of the "low roads" in American political history.

Close behind the "I don't like him" theme often comes the question, "What does Nixon stand for?" The most recent example came from a member of his own party.

In demanding that Mr. Nixon make clear before the Republican National Convention his stand on critical national issues, Governor Rockefeller was voicing what many Democrats and voters have been asking for years.

Perhaps Mr. Nixon best answered the question at the outset of the 1956 campaign, when he carried the burden of the Republican effort because of the illnesses that beset President Eisenhower. Mr. Nixon's answer was, in effect, precisely what he told Governor Rockefeller and the first of many indications that he knew the pitfalls of a candidate's turning his back on his own party's administration.

Cites His Philosophy

"I would say this," he said on Sept. 18, 1956, "* * * I think in my votes in the House and Senate, my public statements throughout my public life, that it is clear that my thinking is very close to what has turned out to be the philosophy of the Eisenhower Administration."

"That's true in the field of foreign policy and it's also true in my approach to economic policy," he continued. "I would say that anybody who questioned that particular matter would have to, I think, give specific instances in which he felt that I disagreed with the Eisenhower philosophy."

Although he may not disagree with the "Eisenhower philosophy," he has had serious disagreements on political tactics and strategy.

One of these occurred in 1957. The occasion was the fight over the Federal budget and the lament by the then Secretary of the Treasury, George M. Humphrey, that Federal spending was too high and that if spending and taxes continued "we will have a depression that will curl your hair."

These and other evidences of uncertainty within the Administration brought on a "flap" that Mr. Nixon made clear to friends should have been stopped cold by the President.

"The heart of an administration is the budget," he said in substance.

That he intends to maintain such discipline was clearly evident this week as he established himself as the leader of the Republican party. He hammered down conservative opposition in a balky platform committee after incurring their wrath by an agreement on "basic positions" in foreign and domestic affairs with Governor Rockefeller.

In a sense Mr. Nixon might be described as a political accident. He had given some thought to running for the California State Assembly before World War II, but not seriously. After the war, he was in Baltimore, awaiting his release from the Navy when the Republican leaders in California's Twelfth District telephoned to suggest that he run for the House of Representatives against Representative Jerry Voorhis, an ardent New Dealer.

The New York Times (by George Tames)

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In this campaign, his first attempt at a public office, Mr. Nixon demonstrated the technique now so well known. He flailed Mr. Voorhis as an "errand boy" for labor and talked about high officials who "front for un-American elements."

In the House Mr. Nixon became a member of a study committee headed by Representative Christian A. Herter, now Secretary of State, which drew bipartisan praise for a review of the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). He also had a hand in drafting the Taft-Hartley Labor-Management Act of 1947, which led to his being tagged as anti-labor and anti-union.

He has sought on many occasions, particularly in helping to settle the country's longest steel strike early this year, to shake the "anti" label.

Mr. Nixon was catapulted onto the national scene by his pursuit of communists in the Democratic Administration, notably, the case against Alger Hiss, who was convicted of perjury. His work on the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the Hiss case set the stage for his successful 1950 Senatorial campaign.

In that campaign he belabored Mrs. Helen Gahagan Douglas with the accusation that she was "soft on communism." His victory pushed him toward the 1952 ticket as running mate to General Eisenhower.

Well-Informed on Policy

Mr. Nixon has been one of the best informed Vice Presidents in all fields, particularly foreign policy, although his public efforts have been chiefly the nine "goodwill" trips he made abroad at the behest of President Eisenhower.

In addition to these overseas trips, he has served as a member of the National Security Council, the President's advisory group on broad strategy and high policy.

All his trips abroad were carefully planned, as is his practice in most tasks, either those placed upon him by the President or those he initiated in Congress and on the national political scene. The risks he and his wife Pat took upon his South American trip were coolly calculated, although the violence of anti-American, Communist-inspired demonstrations in Venezuela and Peru was worse than expected.

He assessed with some accuracy before his departure the reception he would receive from Soviet leaders in Moscow in July, 1959. He indicated to friends that he would welcome a public reception with Soviet Premier Khrushchev. In the "kitchen" of the United States exhibition, he got into a debate with the Premier that boosted his stock as one "who can stand up to the Communists," a theme he and Republicans have already made clear will be heard in this year's campaign.

Although Mr. Nixon has labored faithfully for his party and the "old pros" have rallied solidly behind him, few of the party hierarchy and especially the conservative right-wing element fully understand this Republican who beats the hustings in the manner of Democratic candidates. The right-wing tags him as a liberal, although his voting record in Congress and his public pronouncements indicate right-of-center leanings.

The Vice President has not relied on the Republican organization nationally, regionally or in the states. In effect, he has built his own Republican organization. "Nixon men" are his eyes and ears throughout the country. Instead of the Republican National Committee operating as an entity and the focal point of the party, Mr. Nixon is seeing to it that the committee fits his ideas.

In this last year of the Eisenhower Administration he has moved with greater frequency and more force into the behind-the-scenes activities in Congress. This also was careful planning, as the convention drew near and his need of a record became important. Not only did he "operate" in the Senate, of which the Vice President is the presiding officer, but he also occasionally reached over to the House side, particularly on such delicate legislative measures as education and medical aid for the aged.

The Vice President's brother Donald has said that Mr. Nixon was the "studious" one of the five sons born into a Quaker family at Yorba Linda, Calif. He was the first child born in that farming community thirty miles from Los Angeles. Three of his brothers are still living. In his campaigns Mr. Nixon makes use of his early beginnings, particularly his work as a clerk in Whittier, Calif., the town he calls home.

Mr. Nixon went to public schools and received an A. B. degree from Whittier College in 1937. Three years later he received an LL. B. from Duke University at Durham, N. C.

The Vice President plays golf—he is happy if he breaks 90. He also plays the piano, and has surprised at least one audience by playing with deep feeling "The Missouri Waltz," the "theme song" of one of his severest critics, Mr. Truman.

It was in Whittier that he met Thelma Ryan. He had finished law school at Duke University. Pat, as she was called, had been teaching in the Whittier High School. They met at a try-out for the local little theatre. They were married on June 21, 1940.

Accompanies Husband

Mrs. Nixon has accompanied the Vice President on his foreign tours and on most of his campaign and speaking trips at home. She is much more than scenery. She lends a hand with women's groups and makes the small talk in the social gatherings that Mr. Nixon feels obliged to attend but does not relish.

Their children, Patricia, known as Tricia, 14, and Julie, 12, attend private school, Sidwell Friends, a Quaker institution. The Nixons shifted them from a public school near their home to the private school in 1958.

Mr. Nixon spends as much time with his family as the pressure on him for speeches and other party duties will permit, but he keeps his home-life carefully guarded.

The loyalty of his staff has been a subject of some comment. If he has a secret, it appears to be in the careful selection of the personnel in his always crowded office space, and perhaps the way he often stops by an assistant to give a pat on the back for a piece of work particularly well done.

A "new Nixon" has emerged in the last year. Before Senator John F. Kennedy trimmed his unruly forelock, Mr. Nixon had his hair cut shorter. He has deliberately lost weight. The poundage he shed has removed the heavy, squared-jawed, look of his face, and given him a slimmer, trimmer look.

As his nomination became assured, he began to step out from under the deference he had shown the President. His new confidence before television cameras and microphones was clearly evident. He stepped up his humorous remarks and asides. He joked more with newsmen and photographers but never failed to control completely interviews and press conferences.